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ABSTRACT

Recent trends towards viewing education only in terms of immediate and measurable results and current conditions that are increasing expenditures and lessening income have resulted in a decreased demand for humanities instruction at community colleges. Despite these trends, humanities courses must be blended with vocational curricula, not to provide learning for learning's sake, but to assure that education contributes to the quality of life. Because of their broad missions, low tuition rates, and high success rates, community colleges may fare better in the financial squeeze of the 1980's than four-year colleges. However, the decrease in recent high school graduate enrollments and the need to increase the skill level of the labor force make humanities more vulnerable in hard financial times. The 1980's will probably see a 20% decrease in community college humanities faculty, a greater emphasis on technical training, and an increased demand for thinking and writing skills. In response to these expectations, humanities professors should develop non-credit courses of interest to older people and credit courses flexible enough to interest vocational students. The demand for writing and thinking skills should be met by courses that integrate philosophy and logic. (JP)

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STRENGTHENING HUMANITIES IN COMMUNITY COLLEGES THROUGH THE DEVELOPMENT OF SUPPORT AT COUNTY, STATE, AND NATIONAL LEVELS

DECLINE OF LIBERAL ARTS

There has been a growing trend to view education only in terms of its immediate and measurable results. Some of the results of education are subtle and cannot be assessed through grades, income, or degrees. The problem lies in an attitude that things not immediately measurable are not worthy of investment. Evidence of such a trend can be seen in attempts to find specific learning objectives for every educational outcome. Maryland House Joint Resolution 119 requests that agencies submit a statistical summary with their budgets. The summary should show "measures of program output and cost, such as (a) members or persons served or units produced; (b) cost per person or cost per unit." Many journals have reported cost benefit analyses, studying how much more a person can expect to earn with increasing education.

The view that all education must have tangible and instant results runs counter to much traditional wisdom. Education has roots in helping persons to find meaning in their lives, in uplifting and ennobling the human spirit, and in searching for truth. Such an argument should not be confused with "learning for learning's sake." An education with stress on values and ideas gives course and direction to the decisions of daily life. A vision of education which is merely oriented to that which can be seen and measured today robs people of a service that only education can offer.

Identifying the decline of liberal arts as a problem does not constitute an attack on vocational education. Liberal education must be blended with

technical education so that people will find not merely jobs but meaningful work. Data Processing graduates must be able to do more than write a computer program; Nursing graduates must be able to do more than take a pulse. Each must know how to act with wisdom and responsibility in the society. The programmer may face issues of personal privacy and the nurse may face issues of medical ethics. If education is to contribute to improving the quality of life, education must move beyond outcomes that are immediately measurable.

FINANCIAL SQUEEZE

Conditions which tend to increase college expenditures are more dominant than conditions which increase income. Pressures for increased expenses result from (a) higher costs for energy; (b) low employee turnover (moving more persons to higher ranks); (c) the demand for higher wages; and (d) the labor-intensive nature of colleges with about 80 percent of expenses going for compensation. Factors that inhibit increases in income include (a) a decline in the number of high school graduates; (b) an increase in the proportion of older citizens and slower overall population growth in Maryland (slowing the growth of tax collection); and (c) a desire among some citizens to support more "basic" services, such as fire, police, and sanitation.

Enrollment has begun to stabilize during a period of increasing expenses. With State aid tied to a formula and local governments pressed for funds, most colleges have been increasing the only remaining traditional revenue source: tuition. However, this is only a short-range solution since continued increases could work against the commitment of the states to equal access. Faced with a sudden financial squeeze, many colleges in many states have experienced layoffs that damaged the morale and productivity of the institutions. There is a need

to assess the nature of the financial squeeze in time to prevent precipitous choices and to minimize effects of the sqeeeze on students, faculty, and staff.

STRATEGIES FOR SUPPORT

Community colleges should fair significantly better than four-year public colleges and four-year private colleges through the mid to late 1980s. Several factors contribute to this assessment. First, the community colleges are multi-mission institutions offering not only liberal arts and science transfer programs but also occupational-technical programs and continuing education/community services programs. This gives the community colleges a broad based mission as opposed to the traditional four-year liberal arts oriented colleges and universities. (It is ironic that for many years the community colleges spent most of their energy attempting to emulate their four-year cousins and now four-year colleges are moving toward the introduction of community services/occupational programs offered by community colleges.)

Community colleges are also fortunate to be commuter institutions with relatively low tuition rates which make them extremely attractive in tough economic times. And finally, the record of community college student success upon transfer to four-year colleges has largely dispelled fears that community college students do not gain as high quality education as they might at a four-year school. But these pluses do not mean that everything will come up roses for community colleges through the 1980s, particularly in the Humanities. First-time, full-time enrollments are certain to continue to decline through the mid to late 1980s and into the 1990s. Since these are traditionally high school graduates enrolling in transfer programs, the area to be hardest hit will likely be the arts and sciences. As was indicated earlier, there is also the factor

of key societal leaders demanding programs in technical areas to increase the skill level of America's labor force. These individual views generally run counteractive to the creative discipline required in the pursuit of knowledge in literature, drama, and other similar subject areas. Since community college administrators are generally more attuned to political pressures, the inclination is generally to support a programmatic shift toward technical education, particularly since enrollment potential is higher in that area.

Therefore, faculty members in the Humanities will bear the brunt of the burden in convincing administrators and political leaders of the worth of their courses. Since community colleges are generally local institutions rooted deep in the communities which they serve, the problem of influencing local political leaders and college boards and administrators is a little easier for community college faculty. The fact that an Association for Humanities has been initiated should assist in the development of local chapters on community college campuses to discuss specific issues and problems which are particularly relevant to individual campuses.

PREDICTIONS FOR THE 1980S AND SPECIFIC SUGGESTIONS

1. *In the 1980s there will be a reduction in force of at least 20 percent of the community college faculty currently teaching in the Humanities area.*

   Suggested Solution

   Faculty in the Humanities should consider developing legitimate and well-structured courses offered for noncredit, particularly in those states where reimbursement is made for such courses. These noncredit courses will attract older citizens who are interested in learning and exploring for knowledge, not in accumulating credits or credentials. In those states where such courses are

not eligible for funding, the Association should lead a concerted effort at the local and state level to gain such funding approval.

2. *Through the 1980s I predict there will be significantly greater emphasis placed on the development of technical training programs.*

Suggested Solution

Professors in the Humanities should encourage, not discourage, such development. They should also urge college administrators of the necessity to expose students in these programs to the liberal arts. Faculty should also develop flexibility in course content so as to arouse the interests of such students rather than trying to have the course required and "shove it down the student's throat." Courses should be humanistically oriented and based upon accumulated knowledge but should be carefully structured to meet the needs of students in a changing society. Faculty should remember that the greatest challenge of teaching is to provide an incentive for the student with the desire to learn. Humanities professors should become actively involved with local business and industrial leaders and governmental community development agencies and, particularly, should develop a strong working relationship with members of the boards of trustees and administrators. Faculty should avoid at all cost being cast into an adversary relationship with boards of trustees by administrators. It is very difficult to win any battle under a "we versus they" situation.

3. *Employers will require improved thinking and writing skills from their employees.*

Suggested Solution

The concept that leaders in business and industry only want to hire narrowly trained and specialized employees is largely fallacious. Sophisticated systems

development and emerging technological advances have quantum leaped traditional management theories utilized in business and industry. A tremendous market exists for courses based in the Humanities which can integrate philosophy, logic, and thought development woven into course fabric, the cloth of which will transcend the material of a prior age. To put it in the vernacular, the Humanities professors must rethink their very purpose for existence in the face of potential extinction. Societal and environmental conditions are changing at a geometric pace and the Darwinian ethic may well be the order of the '80s. It would be tragic to see humanists become twentieth century dinosaurs.

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